



A Compact on State High School Graduation Data

America's high schools play an integral role in preparing students for college and work in the 21st century. High school success is more important than ever for the health of our economy, for civic life and to ensure equal opportunity. Unfortunately, the quality of state high school graduation and dropout data is such that most states cannot fully account for their students as they progress through high school. Until recently, many states had not collected both graduation and dropout data, and those that have collected these data have not generally obtained accurate information. Therefore, as education reform efforts increasingly focus on high schools, the quality of graduation and dropout data becomes even more critical.

Earlier this year, the National Governors Association convened a Task Force on State High School Graduation Data—which included representatives from the American Federation of Teachers, the Business Roundtable, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Education Commission of the States, the Educational Testing Service, the Education Trust, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Education Association, Standard and Poor's and the State Higher Education Executive Officers—to make recommendations about how states can develop a high-quality, comparable high school graduation measure. The task force also proposed complementary indicators of student progress and outcomes and data systems capable of collecting, analyzing and reporting the data states need. The task force members found substantial consensus on which to build their findings and recommendations.

With this compact, the undersigned commit to:

- Take steps to implement a standard, four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. States agree to calculate the graduation rate by dividing the number of on-time graduates in a given year by the number of first-time entering ninth graders four years earlier. Graduates are those receiving a high school diploma. The denominator can be adjusted for transfers in and out of the system and data systems will ideally track individual students with a longitudinal student unit record data system. Special education students and recent immigrants with limited English proficiency can be assigned to different cohorts to allow them more time to graduate.
- Lead efforts to improve state data collection, reporting and analysis, and link data systems across the entire education pipeline from preschool through postsecondary education.
- Take steps to implement additional indicators that provide richer information and understanding about outcomes for students and how well the system is serving them. Additional indicators include five- or six-year cohort graduation rates, completion rates for those earning alternative credentials, in-grade retention rates, a college-readiness rate and a high school dropout rate.
- Report annual progress on the improvement of their state high school graduation, completion and dropout rate data.

redesigning
the american
high school



graduation
counts

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